



# EmployeeUPDATE

*Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.*

**A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

## Hooker Odom to leave department; Gov. Easley chooses Dempsey Benton as next DHHS Secretary

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom has announced that she will become president of the Milbank Memorial Fund, leaving DHHS after the current legislative session ends. Gov. Easley has chosen former Raleigh city manager and Department of Environment and Natural Resources Deputy Secretary Dempsey Benton as her successor.

“Accepting this position gives me an unprecedented opportunity to have an impact on the future of critical health care issues across the nation,” Hooker Odom said. “Leaving DHHS is a tough decision. Our team has accomplished so much during the past six-and-a-half years, but I think we have laid a good platform for continued future success in many areas. But, I believe that I can continue to make a difference improving health care for all Americans by working with Milbank.”

The Fund is a New-York based foundation that conducts non-partisan analysis, study and research on significant issues in health policy. Hooker Odom has served on the Milbank board of directors since 2001.

Hooker Odom said that serving as DHHS secretary has been a “rewarding” experience. “The thing about this job is that no two days are alike,” she said. “There are constant challenges but many rewards. In the past six years, I have had the opportunity to meet many of the people that we serve. Looking into their eyes and seeing how their lives are improved by our work – quite simply, this has been one of the most exciting and rewarding times of my life.”

In appointing Benton to head DHHS, Gov. Easley said that a top priority will be to continue efforts to make the state mental health system more accountable and effective.

“Dempsey brings to the Department of Health and Human Services extraordinary managerial and leadership expertise that has already served the state and the city of Raleigh so well,” said Easley. “His thoughtful style will ensure that the department continues to effectively serve our citizens.”

Benton, 62, served as chief deputy secretary of the state Environment and Natural Resources department from 2001 until this January. Most recently, Benton helped lead the governor’s special Hazardous Materials Task Force created following the October 2006 fire at the EQ warehouse in Apex. As a result of Benton’s work and leadership, the governor adopted several of the task force’s recommendations and the General Assembly is in the process of enacting the rest.

Easley said he wants Benton to take a similar approach in immediately further enhancing the accountability

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and effectiveness of mental health services for those in need while also identifying any necessary long-term structural adjustments to be made through changes in the law.

Benton served as Raleigh city manager from 1983 to 2000 and as the city's

assistant manager from 1974 to 1983. Before moving to Raleigh, he served as city manager in Elizabeth City and administrative assistant to the finance director in Rocky Mount.

He graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1967 and received his Mas-

ter's in Public Administration from UNC in 1971. He is a member of the national honor society Phi Beta Kappa and of Phi Alpha Theta, a national history honor society. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Raleigh. They have one daughter. ■

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## **GoTriangle Bike to Work Week**

In observance of GoTriangle Bike to Work Week, five employees in the Division of Public Health's Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch — Diane Beth, Alicia Clark, Sara Huston, Sheree Vodicka and Cameron Graham — biked to work on Monday, May 14. Three of them also rode together on Friday, May 18.

Beth, Huston, Clark and Graham met up with each other at different points on the Raleigh greenway and rode into work together. "The whole trip took about an hour each way," Graham said. "When the weather is nice outside, what better way to spend that hour commuting to work or home than outside on the beautiful Raleigh greenway system!"

Beth and Huston had ridden bikes to work before, but Beth was the only one in the group who had used the greenway system. Her guidance on the greenway route proved to be invaluable. "I don't think any of us would have tried biking to work on the greenway by ourselves, and we were all pretty nervous about trying it, but doing it as a group made it fun and exciting," said Graham. "We liked it so much, in fact, that we did it again on Friday."

The group decided that Clark "definitely gets the Gold Star award" since she hadn't been on a bike in 20 years and had a lot of uphill riding to contend with, but she "did it like a pro."



(Arrival at Work), left to right, Diane Beth, Cameron Graham, Alicia Clark and Sara Huston.

The women have decided to try and ride together to and from work at least once or twice a month, as much for the socializing as the physical activity. Some of them might even try to bike to work once a week. ■



## Jalil Isa *iSalud y Saludos!*

### **Preparing for Hurricane season**

As we get set to begin another hurricane season, the recommendations that are always dispensed by agencies like ours remain the same. But new this year is additional emphasis on how those preparations can have dual or multiple benefits. We're engaged in what those in the media might even call a bit of 'cross-promotion.' While our message about the importance of hurricane preparations continues, the number of ways those preparations can help an individual's life are expanding.

For example, this year, we are emphasizing how having an emergency supply kit can be useful not only during a hurricane but also during other disasters — specifically Pandemic Flu. And my job is to make sure that idea reaches the state's Hispanic population. Hopefully, the more the message gets out there, the more effective we'll be in changing behavior.

A lot of resources, from the feds and trickling down all the way to the local level, have been poured into creating awareness about what steps people should take to prepare for this possible strike. Of course, as we all know, this is only one of many possible disaster scenarios our state could face.

It can't be said enough that we can experience the wrath of a hurricane any year. With this type of disaster comes power outages; in turn,

this could lead to a number of other hazards. And that's just one of the numerous problems bad weather brings. Winter ice storms can also prove devastating, as they have in the past, with carbon monoxide poisonings in the wake of power outages. But with any of these potential crises, preparation is key. And in order to properly prepare, it is necessary to give some forethought to what actions you might take for yourself and your family.

Given that many Latinos come from countries that lack the needed infrastructure and where the emphasis is more along the lines of making sure you work enough that day to secure food on the table...it's not surprising to see total unfamiliarity with these concepts.

It takes time to build this into the culture. Many of us who've been living in this country all our lives still sometimes overlook our own recommendations. Nevertheless, we continue moving forward in getting the message out every chance we get. As we continue taking the lead from the federal health authorities and keep the possibility of Pandemic Flu on our radars, we're tying the preparations necessary for that event into the preparations we already recommend for other disasters. The basics are the same.

But the outreach and strategies aren't stopping with Pandemic Flu...or with our department, for that matter. Recently, the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety worked to put together a 30-minute television video that details the steps individuals should take to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. The governor and several emergency management personnel are featured. The video makes clear that these are preparations that can be life-saving in many circumstances, not just during hurricanes, and it does a great job of illustrating what can happen when things go awry. Both an English version and a Spanish version (which we helped review) of this terrific video were produced.

While we all hope we won't have to contend with Pandemic Flu or any other disaster anytime soon, it's still beneficial for all of us to keep in mind we'll never be completely immune from the effects of natural or man-made disasters. And this will hopefully motivate us to take action now before it's too late. ■

#### **Editor's note:**

See the DHHS hurricane website ([www.ncdhhs.gov/docs/hurricane.htm](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/docs/hurricane.htm)) and Pandemic Flu and You website ([www.ncdhhs.gov/panflu](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/panflu)) for ways you can prepare for such emergencies.

## **Mark Benton promoted to DMA director**

Mark Benton has replaced Dr. Allen Dobson as director of the Division of Medical Assistance.

Dr. Dobson will remain at DHHS, retaining his title as assistant secretary for health policy.

Benton, previously DMA's senior deputy director and chief operating officer, will be responsible for all day-to-day operations of the state's \$10 billion Medicaid program — including clinical affairs, budget and finance, program integrity, managed care and recipient and provider services.

This is Benton's second stint as DMA director. He held the post on an interim basis in 2005, following the retirement of Gary Fuquay.

Benton came to DMA in 2004 as deputy director. Prior to that, he was assistant director for financial programs and chief of budget and planning for the Division of Facility Services from 2000 until 2004. He has also worked in the Division of Budget and Analysis, the Division of Child Development and the Division of Social Services. ■

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## **Central Cancer Registry gets the gold!**

The North Carolina Central Cancer Registry (CCR) has been awarded gold certification by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR) for its submission of 2004 cancer incidence data. This is the highest level of certification awarded by the NAACCR.

The award means that the CCR had very high case coverage, submitted data on time, was 100 percent accurate in key data fields, had very low levels of missing or unknown data, and met other specific quality criteria. The last time that the North Carolina Central Cancer Registry achieved the gold level of NAACCR certification was for data year 2000.

The CCR collects information from medical facilities on patients diagnosed with cancer. The CCR then works to ensure that the best possible information is retained on each case of cancer. The data is then used by North Carolina's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and other public health programs for planning and evaluation. The data is also used for epidemiologic research to better understand prevention, causes, access to care, and survivorship in order to alleviate the burden of cancer on North Carolinians.

Along with all other state cancer registries, the CCR submits data every December to NAACCR for evaluation of completeness, timeliness and quality of data. NAACCR is the standard-setting organization in North America, with membership from all state cancer registries, National Cancer Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Program of Cancer Registries, American College of Surgeons, American Cancer Society and National Cancer Registrars Association.

"This level of certification is truly a reflection of the dedication and hard work of the Central Cancer Registry staff," said Karen Knight, head of the CCR. ■



## N.C. Council on Developmental Disabilities staff recognized as emerging leader

A crisis is looming in the field of developmental disabilities. Many leaders of disability organizations are reaching retirement age and there is not a “next generation” of leaders prepared to move into these positions.

To help ensure that a strong group of new, skilled and effective leaders is available for organizations serving people with developmental disabilities, the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware joined forces with Liberty Healthcare Corporation, ANCOR Foundation, Council on Quality and Leadership and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services. They developed the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities Leadership Institute — intensive week-long trainings led by a

faculty of national experts, for small groups of selected emerging leaders in the developmental disabilities field from organizations across the United States.

N.C. Council on Developmental Disabilities’ program manager Jill Rushing was selected for the national Leadership Institute and graduated from the program earlier this year. Her reflections on the program were incorporated into several of University of Delaware’s publicity pieces. To see her comments and learn more about the Leadership Institute, visit [www.nlcdd.org/pdfs/nlcdd-brochure.pdf](http://www.nlcdd.org/pdfs/nlcdd-brochure.pdf).

Rushing complemented her Leadership Institute experience with the Department’s eight-month leadership training program, LeadershipDHHS. As a result of her LeadershipDHHS



Jill Rushing

training, Rushing proposed a project — which was approved and which she and her teammate are working on now — to increase DHHS employees’ awareness of affordable housing and first-time home buying programs. ■



## DHHS joins nation in support of the victims of Virginia Tech

On April 20, divisions and programs throughout DHHS joined with Governor Mike Easley and the rest of the nation in supporting the Virginia Tech community. A moment of silence was observed in memory of the students and faculty who were killed earlier in the week. Many employees showed their support by dressing in maroon and orange, Tech’s school colors. The Division of Aging and Adult Services’ staff are pictured in the school colors and memorial ribbons.

# N.C. to celebrate World Refugee Day: 'A New Home, A New Life'

Fleeing war and persecution in their homelands, thousands of refugees settle in the United States annually. Increasingly, North Carolina absorbs these vulnerable arrivals.

In recognition of the courage refugees exhibit and the contributions they make to their new communities, the State Refugee Office is joining the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to mark June 20 as World Refugee Day. The theme of this year's observance is "A New Home, A New Life."

Celebrations will take place across the state that week. The main event will be in Charlotte's Bank of America Plaza, 100 N. Tryon St., on Wednesday, June 20, from 11:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Ethnic food vendors and refugee musicians and dancers will join guest speakers sharing their refugee experiences.

Refugees are different from other immigrants or aliens. They are defined by international law as people who are unable or unwilling to return to their native countries because of a well-founded fear of death, imprisonment or other persecution based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

The U.S. allows up to 70,000 refugees to enter and resettle annually, although tightened immigration and national



security policies since 2001 have kept annual refugee numbers well below the ceiling — just over 52,000 in 2005, and 41,269 last year.

North Carolina has become an increasingly prominent destination for refugees, resettling 1,468 in 2006 — or 4 percent of the nation's refugee influx for the year. Refugees settled or joined family in one-fourth of North Carolina's 100 counties last year, led by Mecklenburg (539), Guilford (450), Wake (217), Craven (78) and Buncombe (47) counties.

The State Refugee Office, under the N.C. Division of Social Services, works with faith-based and other organizations to provide short-term assistance to refugees adjusting to a new land and new way of life. Language and job training are the most prevalent of services provided. Refugees are eligible for eight months of financial assistance.

The largest refugee community in North Carolina consists of 18,000 Hmong from Laos now living in the Catawba Valley area around Hickory. More than 8,000 Montagnards call North Carolina home — the largest concentration of Montagnard people outside the highlands of Vietnam. Other prominent refugee populations in North Carolina come from Cuba, Liberia and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma).

In recent years, North Carolina has absorbed nearly 500 Bantu from Somalia, most of whom have settled in Mecklenburg County. The struggles of the persecuted Bantu people and their efforts to assimilate in the U.S. are the subject of an award-winning documentary, "Rain in a Dry Land," that will be screened in several locations across the state as part of World Refugee Day:

- Greensboro at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 607 N. Greene St., on Saturday, June 16, at 6 p.m. Other World Refugee Day events in Greensboro that day include demonstrations of cultural arts, crafts, music, dance and poetry at the Greensboro Historical Museum, 130 Summit Ave., from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m.

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**'A New Home, A New Life' cont. from page 6**

- High Point at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 1401 Heathcliff Road, also on Saturday, June 16, at 6 p.m.
  - Cary at the Galaxy Cinema, 770 Cary Towne Blvd., Wednesday, June 20, at 6 p.m. The event includes light hors d'oeuvres, live music and an exhibit of traditional clothing and handicrafts.
  - Charlotte at the Levine Jewish Community Center, 5007 Providence Road, on Thursday, June 21, at 6 p.m. A question-and-answer session with members of the local Bantu community will follow.
  - Raleigh at the N.C. Museum of Art, 2110 Blue Ridge Road, on Saturday, June 23, at 2 p.m. A discussion with Q&A will follow.
  - Also in Raleigh, state employees — particularly those who work on the Dorothea Dix campus — can view the film in the upstairs conference room of the Adams Building on Friday, June 15, at 1 p.m.
- Other World Refugee Day celebrations include:
- New Bern Farmers Market, 421 S. Front St., on Saturday, June 16, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Displays of arts and crafts, music and food will be provided by various refugee groups, including the Karen, Mon and Chen or Burma, Meskhetian Turks and Montagnards.
  - Quail Ridge Books in Raleigh, 3524 Wade Ave., hosting a music performance by Montagnards on Friday, June 8 at 7 p.m. ■

## Public health social workers meet for annual conference

More than 130 North Carolina Public Health Social Workers came together on April 17 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill to learn, network and celebrate their profession. The theme of this year's conference was "Striking a Balance: Caring for Yourself and Your Clients."

Sessions were held on immigration issues, ethics and domestic violence, strategies for assisting women and families living with depression, choosing not to spank when spanked as a child, creating equity and justice, and healthy weight in women. The final speaker of the day was Michael Clements, MSW, MPH, director of the Downtown Healthy Plaza in Winston-Salem and the current president of the N.C. Public Health Association, who gave a motivating presentation on social work and leadership.

The N.C. Continuing Education and Training Advisory Committee for Public Health Social Work (CETAC) sponsored the event. The co-sponsors were the N.C. Division of Public Health; N.C. Public Health Association; N.C. Association of Public Health Social Workers; UNC School of Public Health; and the National Association of Social Workers, North Carolina Chapter.

CETAC is composed of public health social work practitioners, administrators and educators appointed by State Health Director Leah Devlin and Dr. Barbara K. Rimer, Dean of the UNC School of Public Health. In addition to the annual conference, CETAC offers a speaker's bureau that provides volunteers to make presentations to schools of social work and other interested groups about careers in



Michael Clements of Winston-Salem's Downtown Health Plaza was the conference's closing speaker.

public health social work. CETAC's new brochure on public health social work is available, with other information on public health social work, on its website at:

[www.sph.unc.edu/oce/cetac](http://www.sph.unc.edu/oce/cetac). ■



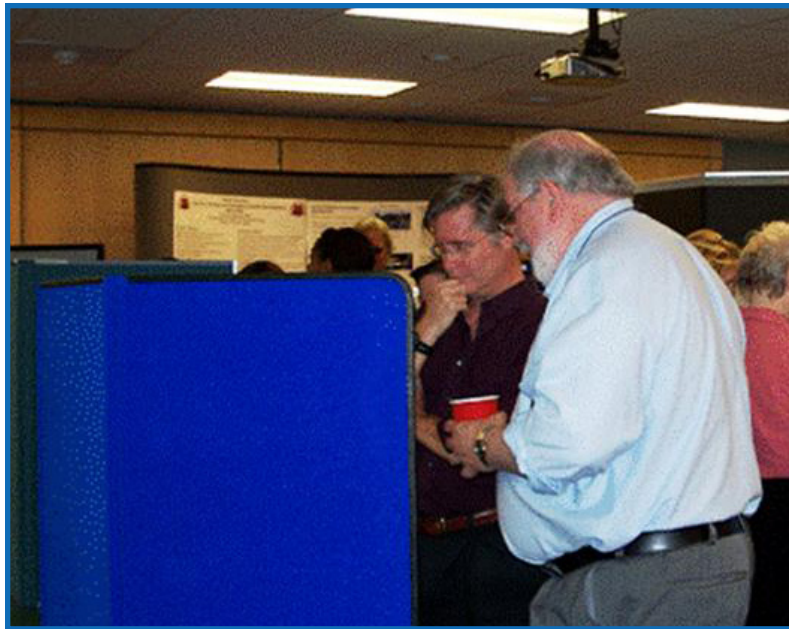
## "Poster Day" in Public Health

The Division of Public Health's Epidemiology and Evaluation Team (EET) held its sixth annual Poster Day session on May 4 at the division's Six Forks Campus. More than 115 people attended the event, and visitors were treated to good food and door prizes in addition to viewing the posters.

Posters, in this case, are visual displays of mini-reports on various research topics, mounted on boards for people to view and discuss. Sixteen informative and creative poster presentations were displayed from a wide array of disciplines. Topics included "N.C.'s Decline in Stroke Mortality," "GIS as a Tool for Distance to Care Analysis," "The Importance of Pre-Pregnancy Body Mass Index and Gestational Weight Gain in the WIC Population," and "Did NC's Smoking Ban Work?: Prisons."

The EET, which began meeting in 2001, originally included epidemiology and evaluation staff from Public Health's Chronic Disease and Health Promotion programs, but has grown over the years and now includes more than 25 members from the Chronic Disease and Injury, Women's and Children's Health, and Epidemiology sections, and the State Center for Health Statistics. Anyone who has job responsibilities (or a strong interest!) in epidemiology or evaluation is welcome to join the team.

The EET monthly meetings provide a forum for staff to share works in progress across sections in a friendly, respectful atmosphere and to obtain constructive feedback and assistance with project challenges. Members are able to increase



Dr. Kevin Ryan, chief of Public Health's Women's and Children's Health Section, listens as Terence Fitz-Simons discusses cancer incidence in North Carolina.

their knowledge of epidemiology and evaluation efforts in sections outside their own and become part of a network of people with various areas of programmatic and epidemiologic expertise. The EET also organizes a Poster of the Month, which allows members to showcase their work by displaying a wall poster on the ground floor of the 5505 Six Forks Road building.

The leadership for this team comes from the members. While there are two co-coordinators, it is up to members to volunteer to make presentations, suggest topics or activities for the monthly meetings, and give constructive feedback to the presenters. The EET meetings are held from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on the fourth Monday of each month on the Six Forks Campus. If you are interested in joining the team, please contact co-coordinator Sarah McCracken Cobb via email ([sarah.mccracken@ncmail.net](mailto:sarah.mccracken@ncmail.net)) or phone (919.707.5515). ■



# Safe Surrender public awareness campaign begins

DHHS has launched a public awareness campaign aimed at educating the public about the state's Safe Surrender Law, which aims to keep unwanted newborns safe from neglect or harm.

The Safe Surrender Law states that it allows "an overwhelmed parent to surrender a baby less than seven days old to a responsible adult and walk away. Safe surrender is legal and anonymous. Anyone who receives a baby in this way must keep the baby safe and warm, and call 911 or the county social services department immediately."

As part of the campaign, public service announcements are airing on both English- and Spanish-language radio stations statewide.

A redesign of the Safe Surrender website, **[www.safesurrender.net](http://www.safesurrender.net)**, was launched in mid-May.



Television public service announcements created by the N.C. Bar Association, Tivoli Partners in Charlotte and WRAL-TV will be distributed to TV stations statewide

Materials created through this campaign will be distributed to local social service and health departments and made available to other programs that request them.

For more information, contact Lori Walston in Public Affairs at 919-733-9190 or [lori.walston@ncmail.net](mailto:lori.walston@ncmail.net). ■

in early June. The video PSAs will also be available on DVD for use in local office settings, such as county departments of social services and local health departments.

Another element of the campaign is a window decal that includes the Safe Surrender logo, Web address and telephone number. 1-800-FOR-BABY. These 4-by-4-inch decals can be placed on car windows, entry doors or any other area that might draw attention and raise awareness about this law.

## **More about BEACON: Employee self-service will offer advantages**

The employee self-service features of BEACON, the new payroll and human resource processes coming soon to state government agencies, will offer advantages to both agency employees and human resource staff.

With employee self-service (ESS), employees can handle many of their own basic human resource transactions instead of having to send requests through their managers or human resources offices. That will give state employees a greater sense of ownership and control of the management of their careers, and will also free up human resource staff to focus on strategic activities such as workforce planning and development.

With just a little training, state employees will be able to:

- securely update their personal information, such as address, phone numbers, and dependants;
- view and print past and current pay stubs;

- access multiple-year W-2 information;
- see how much vacation time they have available; and
- enroll in the State Health Plan and for NCFlex benefits on-line.

ESS reduces paper shuffling, e-mails and phone calls and saves time and cuts costs by putting many day-to-day record-keeping and career development responsibilities directly in the hands of employees. Employees no longer have to wonder who to call or what form to use to manage their personal information. ESS is easy to use and easily accessible through any Web browser.

Since not all state employees have direct access to a computer with an Internet connection, the state's BEACON project team is researching the possibility of centrally locating specialized kiosks in designated state agency buildings to allow employees easy access to the ESS web site.

Watch for more detailed information, including training opportunities, about ESS and BEACON in the coming months. BEACON will be implemented in several state agencies this fall. DHHS is scheduled to go "live" with the new system in spring, 2008. ■



# 2007 SECC is on the horizon!

Plans for the 2007 State Employees Combined Campaign are under way, and volunteers throughout DHHS are preparing for another successful effort to raise funds for hundreds of charitable organizations. The 2007 statewide theme for the SECC is "Follow Your Heart!" Our campaign kick-off date is Aug. 1.

In 2006, DHHS employees raised \$392,586 for participating charities, including a number of foundations that support DHHS mental health institutions – an 8 percent increase over our 2005 total.

As the state's primary agency for planning and delivering an array of health and human services, DHHS employees on all levels have demonstrated their commitment to helping others by volunteering for the SECC. Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom has been a steadfast and hands-on supporter for the fund-raising effort, encouraging volunteerism and generating support for the campaign as well as serving as a regional SECC chair. Dan Stewart, chief deputy secretary, is a member of the statewide SECC Advisory Committee as was Linda Povlich, senior advisor to the secretary, before him.

In addition, hundreds of other volunteers throughout the department – whether in a division or one of our many institutions that serve our state's most vulnerable citizens – give time and effort to organize and promote their local campaigns and to make the overall campaign such a resounding success.

The department's cadre of volunteers includes the Department Executive Team, which has primary responsibility for planning the DHHS campaign. The team members are John McCallum, Council on Developmental Disabilities; Floyd Jones, Office of the Secretary; Gary Kugler, Division of Medical Assistance; Genny Pugh, director of the Black Mountain Center; and Aleck Myers, director of the Murdoch Center. They work closely with the state campaign office staff and department executives from other state agencies to develop ideas for promoting the campaign among state employees.

The team has planned a series of meetings to give DHHS SECC volunteers in locations across the state an opportunity to learn more about the SECC and its role in supporting North Carolinians and their communities. Open to new volunteers as well as veteran coordinators, these sessions will focus on campaign planning strategies, planning special events, and distributing campaign materials. All DHHS volunteers are encouraged to attend these important meetings so that our campaign is well-planned and cohesive. The schedule for these meetings is:



## **July 17, 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

Goldsboro, NC  
Cherry Hospital  
Cherry Hospital Conference Center

## **July 18, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

Morganton, NC  
Western Piedmont  
Community College  
Learning Resource Center 120

## **July 19, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

Asheville, NC  
Black Mountain Center  
GII Training Room

## **July 19, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

Butner, NC  
Murdoch Center  
Murdoch Administration  
Conference Room

## **July 24, 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

Raleigh, NC  
DHHS  
210 Royster Building  
Conference Room

Please support the DHHS State Employees Combined Campaign. Your investment of time and money will help our state in many positive ways by strengthening individuals as well as communities. You really can make a difference! ■

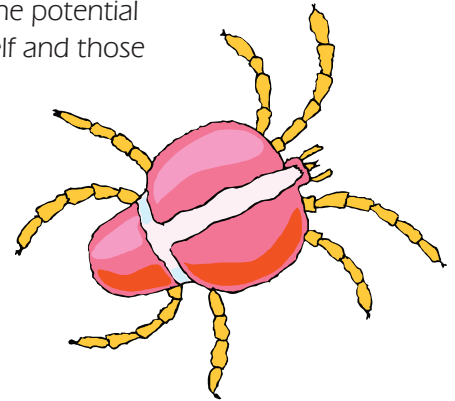


# Protect yourself:

## Mosquito, tick bites could be more than a mere nuisance

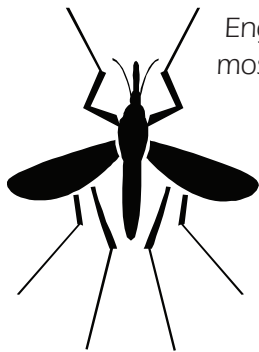
Prickly insects can be more than just itchy, icky nuisances. They have the potential to make you seriously ill. That's why you need to act to protect yourself and those you love.

"As it warms up, more people are going to head outside," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Jeff Engel. "At the same time, tick and mosquito populations will increase. We want folks to be aware that ticks and mosquitoes can be more than just a nuisance – they can also make people seriously ill."



Dr. Nolan Newton, chief of the Public Health Pest Management Section of the Division of Environmental Health, said that people can take steps to prevent illness. "You can make your backyard a whole lot less tick-friendly," he said. "Keep grass short and remove plants that attract wild animals like deer and rodents, which carry ticks."

Newton said that removing any containers that hold water will take away mosquito breeding grounds. "Now is the time to take a good look at your environment, before the mosquitoes really start biting," he said. "Things like bird baths, old tires, planters and even small containers like tin cans can give mosquitoes a place to thrive."



Engel and Newton said that insect repellant can also be useful, particularly against mosquitoes. Consumers should read and follow the instructions on the labels.

Exposure to both mosquitoes and ticks can be limited by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks. People should also check themselves and their families repeatedly for ticks when in tick-prone areas.

Proper and prompt removal of ticks is the key to preventing infection. Use fine-tipped tweezers to remove ticks, getting as far forward near the head as possible and pulling steadily. Save the tick. The easiest way to do that is to tape it on a card and mark the date. If someone gets sick, the tick will be available for testing.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is the most common tick-borne illness in North Carolina. According to the North Carolina Division of Public Health, there were 842 cases reported in North Carolina during 2006. The state also has other tick-borne illnesses, including Lyme disease, with 30 cases reported last year and Ehrlichiosis with 57 cases. All tick-borne diseases occur across the state.

La Crosse virus is the most common mosquito-borne illness; it is found mostly in the western part of the state. Two other mosquito-borne diseases, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV), are also found in North Carolina. While EEE is found largely in the eastern part of the state, WNV is found across the state.

# INTRODUCING THE BUSINESS OF

This is the third in a series of articles that introduce the DHHS Business Plan and elaborate on the different Business Drivers identified in the plan.

## Business Driver #2

### **DHHS will sustain a culture of continuous improvement by:**

- Identifying and implementing best practices and measuring for results;
- Empowering decision makers;
- Sustaining a high performance workforce; and
- Providing tools to enable decision making.

On April 24, Toyota announced that it had overtaken General Motors as the world's largest car maker, at least in terms of sales and profitability. While there are many reasons for Toyota's ascent and GM's decline, it is noteworthy that the term "continuous improvement" (or Kaizen in Japanese) is closely associated with Toyota, where it is employed as a method to eliminate waste – activities that add cost but do not add value.

So what does the business of DHHS have to do with making and selling automobiles?

Continuous improvement means more than eliminating waste. Simplifying work processes, increasing speed and efficiency, and constantly improving the services we provide are all elements of positive change and adaptation. It doesn't matter whether you are an individual alone in an office, conducting research, working as part of a team to deliver community services ... or making cars. Striving for continuous improvement is a basic philosophy that each of us should bring to our jobs every day.

To a great extent, we can improve how we perform our jobs by understanding and implementing the following principles:

- 80 percent of problems are caused by 20 percent of the issues.
- Too often, we treat the symptoms and not the root cause of our problems.
- If you take time out of a process, you automatically improve the quality.
- It's not normal to make mistakes. Mistakes are usually process-driven.
- Human services are subject to process improvement efforts just like anything else. Our services are our products!
- We commonly are told "Do more with less." Learn to "Do less with less" and your resources will expand.

In 2004, the Early Childhood Workforce section of the Division of Child Development was in deep trouble. Their process to conduct criminal record checks (CRC) for thousands of prospective child care workers around the state was out of control. Although they were able to process over 20,000 CRCs per year, applications were backlogged and sat untouched for up to fifteen weeks.

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**Introducing the Business of DHHS, cont. from page 13**

From the time an application was submitted, an individual sometimes had to wait nearly six months for a result. Child care providers, their employees, and state regulators were extremely frustrated.

In the past, efforts had been made to reduce the backlog, but reductions were always temporary – the problem came right back. It was not until ECW concentrated on identifying root causes of the backlog that real progress was made. This included implementing measurements, identifying non-value-added activities, and simplifying work processes.

In less than one year, the CRC Unit was able to reduce mail backlog to zero, reduce total processing time to 15 days, and absorb new work from other areas of DHHS with minimal additions to the workforce.

It is essential that DHHS incorporate a philosophy of continuous improvement throughout the department so that we can adapt to our changing environment by maintaining and improving our products and services. Continuous improvement will also help us to compete in the marketplace for scarce funding and for the best employees we can find.

**Next Month: DHHS Business Needs**

See the complete DHHS Business plan at [www.ncdhhs.gov/opp/businessplan/index.htm](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/opp/businessplan/index.htm).

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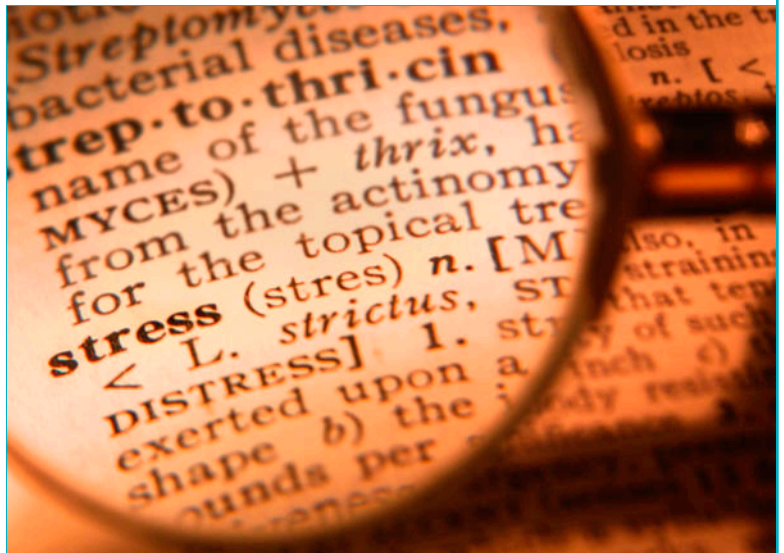
## **DHHS WELLNESS INITIATIVE**

### **Stress in the Workplace**

**Suzanna Young,**  
*DHHS Wellness Initiative Director*

DHHS Wellness Coordinator Suzanna Young had the opportunity to attend a stress management workshop this month and was alarmed to learn how serious stress in the workplace is to the health of employees.

Job-related stress costs American companies an estimated \$2-\$3 billion a year. Almost half of job turnover is caused by job-related stress. Of greater concern are the increased numbers of stress-related health conditions among employees.



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## DHHS Wellness Initiative cont. from page 14

decreased immune functions; increased risk of heart disease, stroke, headache, and cancer; as well as problems with depression, sleep disturbance and substance abuse.

According to Young, national surveys reporting an epidemic of stress in the workplace were confirmed by our own 2005 DHHS employee survey that found job-related stress issues to be among the top health concerns of our employees. Fifty-eight percent of DHHS employees responding to the survey asked for help in learning ways to better cope with feelings of stress.



It's easy to think that job stress is usually about having too much work to do in too little time. However, the harmful effects of job-related stress have more to do with feeling a lack of control and a sense of helplessness over about work responsibilities or work situations. These feelings may be caused by a number of things such as:

- feeling unsupported in dealing with the workload or in resolving problems at work;
- a lack of trust and positive communication with co-worker(s) or a supervisor;
- organizational situations that create problems beyond our capacity to improve them;
- concern about job security or changes in the workplace; or
- lacking some of the skills we need to do our jobs.

Individuals are affected differently by stressful situations, and not all people find the same things stressful. Many people have what many others would consider very stressful jobs, but they don't suffer the negative effects of stress. This is likely because they feel comfortable about their capacity to accomplish their work and to deal with problems as they arise. The more employees feel in control of their work environment, the less likely they are to suffer chronic work-related stress.

Because many of the things that increase stress at work are many times out of the control of individual employees, whatever individuals can do to personally manage stress can help reduce stress' harmful effects on their mental, emotional and physical health.

Including short stress breaks during the day can make a big difference in decreasing the negative effects of job stress. Try to do some or all of the following each day

- Take a walk during the workday at lunch or during your break. Exercise, even for just a few minutes, is one of the best stress relievers available.
- Do stretching exercises at your desk at least twice a day.
- Practice slow relaxation breathing at intervals during the day.
- Improve your work area by adding (if possible) calming additions such as plants, pictures, an aquarium --- and bring a lamp to take the place of fluorescent lighting.
- Include humor in your day. Try to read something funny every day. Listen to a funny CD during commutes or watch a short funny film during your lunch break. Watching violence or emotional

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## Safety Trainer certificate awarded



Mark Martin (left), DHHS-DHR Safety Director presents Ricky Tew (right), DDS Safety Officer with the first DHHS Safety Trainer Certificate on behalf of Kathy Gruer, Director, Division of Human Resources.

Ricky Tew of Disability Determination Services (DDS) was awarded the Department's first DHHS Safety Trainer Certificate under the DHHS Certified Safety Representative Program on 16 May 2007 in a ceremony held at the Adams Building in Raleigh.

Tew was the featured presenter at the DHHS Safety Trainers' Workshop held 18 April at O'Berry Center. His presentation during this conference was the culminating event and earned him the designation of DHHS Safety Trainer. Tew is the Safety Officer for Disability Determination Services

which adjudicates the claims of persons filing for disability benefits with the Social Security Administration.

The mission of DDS is vital to the citizens of North Carolina in processing Social Security Administration claims for disability benefits. Tew oversees the Safety Program that provides a safe and healthful workplace for all DDS employees. The DDS facility in Raleigh is 150,000 square feet and employs more than 600 people. The facility routinely undergoes and passes strict federal inspection guidelines. Tew is one of the first people new employees meet in DDS

when they attend his Newcomer's Safety Briefing. Disability Determination Services, a part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, takes great pride in providing excellent services to their employees as well as to the citizens of North Carolina. Tew's dedication to safety ensures both. ■

# Adoption Profile

## Introducing Ashley

Ashley can be a very affectionate girl, but she prefers to be the initiator of any physical contact. She can be kind and very helpful and is well-behaved both at home and in school. She enjoys listening to all kinds of music, but country is her favorite. Ashley loves to read and likes to cook. She generally prefers non-athletic, indoor activities, although she has enjoyed camping. Ashley doesn't know what career path she'd like to take, but she definitely wants to go to college.

Ashley is very intelligent and does very well in school. She has no problem staying on task and is polite and respectful in class. Ashley is learning to take responsibility for her actions, especially outside of school.



Ashley  
b. June 11, 1992

## A Family for Ashley

An adoptive family for Ashley should have parenting experience and the maturity to guide a teenager. They should be able to provide a stable and nurturing environment along with clearly set rules and consequences. Ashley is a unique young woman who requires a good deal of individual attention and praise. She could do well with other children, as long as she receives enough attention herself.

For more information on this child or adoption and foster care, in general, call N.C. Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network toll-free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371). ■

## DHHS Wellness Initiative cont. from page 15

dramas has been shown to increase stress, while humor decreases it. Humor has even been shown to improve our problem-solving abilities.

- Make a friend at work. Having someone to talk to and confide in can help enormously to reduce stress levels at work.
- Don't take your job home either physically or mentally. You will be more productive at work if you come back refreshed rather than feeling that you never get a break from work.

For more ideas about stress and time management, **get the handout.**